

RESERVE COMPONENT MOBILIZATION: Improving Accountability, Effectiveness, AND Efficiency

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Whereas, No adequate means has been provided for obtaining the numerical volunteer force enlisted in the several counties of this State . . . , the adjutant general of this State shall . . . transmit to the county clerk of each county in this State a correct list of the persons mustered into the service of the United States, or of this State, from such county. . . .¹

A RECENT SERIES of articles in *USA Today* revealed that more than 3 years after the invasion of Iraq, the military services were unable to state authoritatively how many service members have deployed.² The Army was best able to answer the question, but what should have been a “good news” story on this score was tainted by inconsistency among the various databases about the precise number of Soldiers who have participated in the Iraq campaign.

The Problem

Figure 1 depicts the estimate of current mobilized strength for the U.S. Army National Guard (ARNG) as of March 2005, as reflected in various military databases. The figure reveals great disparity among the databases, with estimates ranging from a low of 82,760 to a high of 108,724, a discrepancy of nearly 24 percent. In figure 2, the picture improves somewhat. Corrections for the dates of the various samples narrow the gap to about 20 percent, which is better, but still a big difference.³ Figure 3 provides another perspective. It depicts the estimated aggregate number of ARNG Soldiers drawing hazardous duty pay in early April 2005 as reflected in Army payroll versus ARNG operational data. In this example, the aggregate number of Soldiers differs by only 148 Soldiers. But when viewed from a unit perspective, these data are also problematic: Of the 1,885 ARNG units reflected in Army payroll data as having Soldiers receiving hazardous duty pay, 334 units had never mobilized.⁴

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DA Data (18 March 2005)	ARNG Data (18 March 2005)	TAPDB (1 March 2005)	DFAS Data (15 March 2005)
108,724	99,399	96,176	82,760

Legend: ARNG, Army National Guard; DA, Department of the Army; DFAS, Defense Finance and Accounting Service; NGB, National Guard Bureau; TAPDB, Total Army Personnel Database.

Figure 1. Raw data: Number of mobilized ARNG Soldiers on duty as of March 2005. Discrepancy between largest and smallest: 25,965, approximately 24 percent (source: NGB).

DA (18 March 2005)	ARNG (18 March 2005)	TAPDB (1 March 2005)	DFAS (15 March 2005)	Comments
108,724	99,399	96,176	82,760	Figure 1 data.
		1,111		Soldiers mobilized between 1 and 18 March 2005, therefore not included in TAPDB numbers.
			3,500	Full-time ARNG Soldiers mobilized but not reflected in DFAS data.
			826	Soldiers mobilized between 1 and 15 March 2005, therefore not included in DFAS numbers.
108,724	99,399	97,287	87,086	Adjusted totals

Figure 2. Adjusted data: Number of mobilized ARNG Soldiers on duty as of March 2005. Discrepancy between largest and smallest: 21,638, approximately 20 percent (source: NGB).

	Soldiers Receiving HD Pay	Units with Soldiers Receiving HD Pay
ARNG operation data	52,443	1,551
DFAS pay data	52,295	1,885
Discrepancy	148	(334)

Figure 3. Hazardous duty (HD) pay by Soldier and Derivative Unit Identification Code (DUIC) as of April 2005 (source: NGB).

Such discrepancies are extremely frustrating for senior leaders struggling to understand the true status of the force. Resolving discrepancies requires virtually a forensic analysis of unit strength data, a tedious and difficult exercise. A number of factors contribute to this: Army reliance on stovepiped, unsynchronized information systems; inefficient procedures for assembling forces into discrete mission packages; and extensive unit fragmentation driven by current mobilization policies and practices.⁵

Although these examples use ARNG data, we must recognize that this is not just an ARNG problem. The problems at issue are just as pertinent to the other Reserve Components (RCs).

Progress to Date

Since 9/11, the Army has taken a number of steps to streamline and improve accountability of

the force. The first was development of the U.S. Department of the Army Mobilization Processing System (DAMPS). DAMPS is a Web-based, mostly paperless system for executing unit mobilization actions from request for alert through publication of unit mobilization orders. The system has greatly improved the mobilization process. Another example is the Deployed Theater Accountability System (DTAS), another Web-based system. DTAS provides comprehensive visibility in the time and space of units and personnel deployed in-theater. Another system is the Deployment and Redeployment Tracking System (DARTS), which is a Web-based system developed by U.S. Army Forces Command that tracks the deployment status of RC Soldiers and units.

Valuable as these systems are, while they solve some problems, they aggravate others. They improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their sponsoring commands, but they can exacerbate the Army's overall accountability problem because each propagates yet another stovepiped, stand-alone database, creating still more instances of conflicting data. Fortunately, the Army has begun to recognize this and is working to remedy one of our most vexing accountability challenges—to correctly match individual mobilized Soldiers at the social security number level to the units with which they are serving. This problem exists in large part because data are transferred among the various databases manually and because systems

operate on different internal parameters. This results in abundant opportunities for introducing errors. The solution currently under development is to automatically cross-populate the various databases when the Soldier's individual mobilization orders are initiated.

Reconciling these dueling databases will be a great stride forward but, alone, would not be enough to substantially streamline the process of mobilizing Soldiers. The Army will never be able to "see" itself accurately until it can adequately aggregate small units and individuals into discrete, durable mission packages that are recognized across all U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) systems. Understanding this problem requires familiarity with a few basic concepts in the mobilization process. The first is how the Army identifies and tracks units. Every unit has a name, usually consisting of an alphanumeric designation and a description of the unit type, sometimes with a special capability descriptor appended. The names are used in the vernacular, but military databases track units by unit identification code (UIC), a 6-digit alphanumeric designation unique to each unit. When only a fragment of a unit mobilizes, a special derivative unit identification code (DUIC) is created for that element. The codes are analogous to an individual Soldier's social security number and are used in every action affecting the unit.

Understanding how the Army mobilizes RC Soldiers is also important. Unlike Soldiers in the Individual Ready Reserve, members of U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) or ARNG units are not directly mobilized. The Army mobilizes the units, and the respective Reserve Components mobilize the Soldiers in those units.⁶ The mechanism for accomplishing this is a U.S. Department of the Army (DA) unit mobilization order that specifies the unit name, UIC/DUIC, authorized number of personnel, and the date the unit will enter active duty, among other information. The respective components and First U.S. Army then execute orders by implementing orders of their own.⁷

This seems simple enough, but things soon get murky. Large units must frequently mobilize some Soldiers to attend military schools or to act as an advance party before the unit's main body arrives. But this creates a dilemma: The services cannot directly mobilize Soldiers individually, while

	Battalions and Separate Companies	UICs
Organic structure	11	35
Early mobilizing DUICs		58
Filler and plug DUICs		73
TOTAL UICs		166

Legend: DUIC, Derivative identification code; UIC, Unit identification code.

Figure 4. UIC/DUIC structure of one brigade-size unit mobilized for service in Iraq (source: NGB).

Reserve Components cannot mobilize units or Soldiers without the authorization of their parent services. Reserve Components break this cycle by assigning these Soldiers to specially created DUICs that the Army then mobilizes separately, ahead of the parent unit.⁸

Cross-leveling of personnel further complicates matters. To reach full strength, most RC units require both augmentation and replacements for losses incurred during the unit's mobilization and deployment. For ARNG units, augmentees usually come from within the parent unit's home state. Some will come from other states, however, which creates another unique problem: Under current practices, a Soldier from one state cannot be assigned directly to a unit in another state or another component. Just as they do with early mobilizing elements, the components solve this problem by assigning cross-state and cross-component augmentees to special DUICs created by the Soldier's home state or component. The augmentees then join the recipient unit on mobilization.⁹

Figure 4 illustrates how this practice affects unit organization. It depicts the UIC structure of a brigade-size RC unit previously mobilized for service in Iraq. The operational structure of this particular unit consisted of 11 battalions and separate companies organized into about 35 organic UICs. When actually mobilized, however, the organization deploys with 166 UICs and DUICs. These are not 166 separate tactical elements, of course. The Soldiers assigned to them are incorporated into the organization's organic structure and task organized for combat, regardless of which DUIC they mobilize with. However, many

of the Army's personnel and operational databases track each DUIC as a separate entity throughout the mobilization, as if it was an actual operational unit.

By now you might be tempted to ask: So what? Who cares whether a unit deploys with one UIC or 100? In fact, it matters a great deal. DUIC proliferation creates an enormous burden for unit commanders and staffs struggling to manage and account for large units. The Army must maintain every DUIC activated and account for each through every phase of unit mobilization and deployment. Because each DUIC is technically a separate unit, commanders must waste a great deal of effort duplicating administrative actions for several DUICs that would normally need to be accomplished only once per unit.

Another major challenge is identifying and filling unit vacancies. One problem is that cross-leveling and capabilities-based (vice unit-based) unit sourcing causes an extraordinary fragmentation of RC units. After almost 5 years of war, nearly every RC unit has a significant population of Soldiers who have previously mobilized. Under current policy these Soldiers are usually not available to mobilize again unless they volunteer to do so. Current readiness reporting procedures do not account for this significant problem. Postmobilization attrition before deployment caused by training injuries is another problem. And then there are problems that are not visible to the chain of command before mobilization. The result is a high degree of personnel turbulence that makes it difficult for the Reserve Components to track losses with any degree of fidelity, which in turn can significantly delay the arrival of replacement Soldiers at the unit. This complicates unit training and other preparations.

Force Tailoring

For these and other reasons, correctly visualizing the personnel status of RC units is a major challenge. Something better is required. A successful successor to current practices would include several elements:

- A force-tailoring system that would modify existing units or build new ones to meet specific mission requirements in-theater.
- A mission packaging system that would aggregate disparate elements into discreet, enduring mission packages that would remain visible throughout mobilization and deployment, regardless of task organization in-theater.¹⁰

- A manpower-generation system capable of assessing unit manpower shortages, identifying Soldiers or units to fill those vacancies, and tracking the status of these shortages and the efforts being made to fill them throughout the process.

These elements would be interdependent, would interface effectively with existing legacy systems, and together would comprise an integrated system that—

- Would incorporate changes into policy, procedures, and database systems.
- Would be driven from the bottom up and oriented toward input from the lowest possible level, starting with company commanders and first sergeants.
- Would be Web-based, receiving information from and uploading it to existing legacy databases (including populating and editing data fields and modifying or customizing unit structure as reflected in those systems).
- Would contain cross-reference data in new and legacy systems, automatically updating and reconciling where possible and publishing error reports to unit commanders for remedial action when appropriate.
- Would be built from commercially available, off-the-shelf products rather than the specially designed, proprietary systems the Army customarily employs.¹¹

Force-Tailoring Module

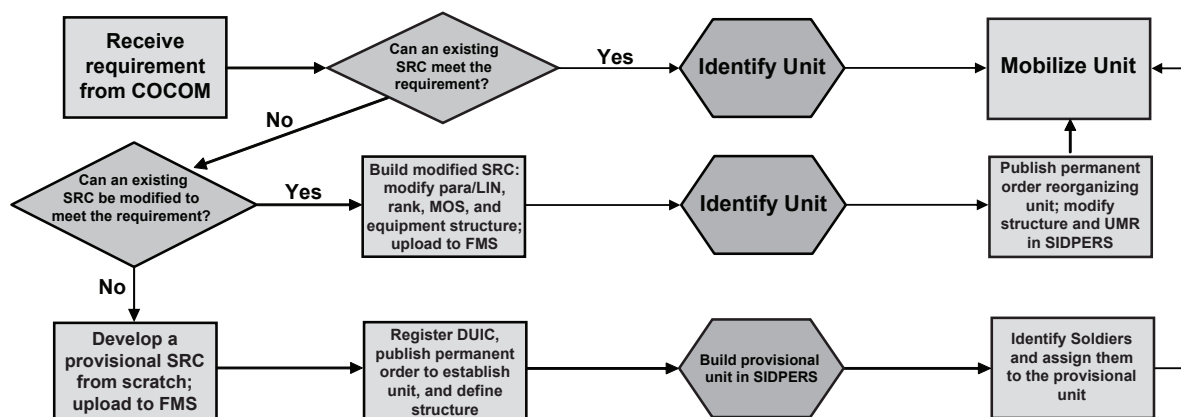
The first component of this new system would be a force-tailoring module like the one figure 5 depicts. The primary aim of this module would be to—

- Reconfigure existing units or to generate new ones to meet capability requirements in-theater.
- Help unit commanders modify the modified tables of organization and equipment (MTOE) and unit-manning rosters of existing units.
- Design and build provisional units in response to requirements received from theater.

Modifications would include—

- Adding or deleting portions of the unit structure.
- Modifying the unit's authorized rank and military occupation specialty structure.
- Changing gender-assignment codes.
- Modifying equipment authorizations.
- Making other changes as required.

The new system would automatically upload these changes and other data into all relevant legacy systems and automatically identify and resolve any second- and third-order effects of such modifications (such as bonus, promotion, assignment, and



Legend: COCOM, Combatant Command; DUIC, Derivative Unit Identification Code; FMS, Force Management System; LIN, line number; MOS, military occupation specialty; para, paragraph; SIDPERS, Standard Installation/Division Personnel System; SRC, standard requirement code; UMR, unit manning roster.

Figure 5. Proposed force-tailoring module (source: NGB).

readiness rating problems, and so on), or it would prompt unit commanders to take appropriate steps to resolve them. More important, the system would be driven from the bottom up. Commanders and staffs at unit and Joint Force Headquarters/Regional Readiness Command levels would organize the modified unit, including developing a provisional table of distribution of allowances or MTOE, publishing permanent orders establishing the unit, populating the provisional unit manning document, and taking other appropriate actions.

The respective components would then initiate a request for alert and mobilization of the reconfigured unit, if that had not already occurred. The unit would endure in this provisional configuration only for the duration of the mission, automatically reverting to its basic configuration at a pre-determined point following demobilization.

Mission Packaging

Another critical requirement is to develop an effective mission-packaging system. Current mobilization practices use DUICs as the primary vehicle for mobilizing Soldiers before the main body of their unit mobilizes and for bringing out-of-state or cross-component augmentees into RC units. Unfortunately, the Army has no effective means of bundling them together for accountability.

Proliferation of DUICs injects an extraordinary level of friction into mobilization and accountability efforts. A new approach would eliminate this friction by establishing the following rule as a basic operating principle: *One unit, one UIC, one unit mobiliza-*

tion order. All assigned personnel at the company or detachment level would be packaged into a single unit organized under one UIC/DUIC with a single unit mobilization order, regardless of state or component of origin or the date when the individuals mobilized with respect to the unit's main body. Only bona fide units would be mobilized via the unit mobilization process; that is, only an entity with a defined structure and chain of command, a corporate identity, and a defined collective mission. Individuals or groups not meeting these criteria would be mobilized outside the unit process through personnel channels.

When developing the provisional unit organization, RC commanders would be able to excise the organic structure that would remain behind in a rear detachment DUIC and incorporate unit plugs (even from other states, components, or services) directly into the provisional unit in their place. This would require policy changes. One such change would be to create guidelines that would allow the early mobilization of a clearly defined segment of every mobilizing unit. Authorization for such could be communicated via enabling language in the DA unit mobilization order authorizing a specified number of Soldiers to mobilize a specified number of days before the entire unit mobilized.

A knottier problem is one that is caused by unit plugs, individual fillers, and replacements mobilizing from across state lines. The operational, administrative, and legal framework of the Army mobilization system rests on the assumption that ARNG units will mobilize as complete entities and that ARNG and USAR Soldiers will be involuntarily mobilized only

as members of their respective units and not individually. Unfortunately, these assumptions proved false when RC mobilizations became commonplace after the Cold War, especially when it became immediately clear that a need would frequently arise for only a portion of a given RC unit's capabilities, but not for the entire unit. DUICs were developed to meet this need. The required capability is formed into a provisional unit under the DUIC. This provisional element might or might not be a unit in the common understanding of the word, but it would be treated as a unit in a technical sense and staffed through the mobilization process as if it were a complete, organic unit.¹²

Creating provisional units has been a useful expedient, particularly during the relatively modest level of mobilization prevalent before 9/11. When employed under the dramatically expanded RC mobilization in support of the Global War on Terror, however, this useful expedient proves problematic. Extensive reliance on the unit mobilization process to accomplish what are really individual mobilization actions—

- Undermines strength and individual accounting within the RC force.
- Significantly delays arrival of Soldiers at their units.
- Vastly increases the administrative burden required to bring these Soldiers on active duty.

Some argue that the law imposes the expedient of DUICs on us, citing Title 10, *U.S. Code*, Section 12302(a), Ready Reserve, as authority.¹³ This language combined with a regulatory language that allows “units” to consist of a single Soldier leads some to conclude that only by employing the mechanism of DUICs as fictional units can we legally mobilize fillers from across state or component lines. This reasoning cannot bear scrutiny, however. Neither the statute nor DOD Directive 1235.10, “Activation, Mobilization, and Demobilization of the Ready Reserve,” mention DUICs or prescribe any specific procedures for implementation, leaving these details instead to the respective services.¹⁴

A basic rule of statutory interpretation is to construe the language of a statute according to its plain meaning. Clearly, according to the usual understanding of the term, “unit” implies a collective or group, not an individual Soldier.¹⁵ Thus, it is arguably sounder operationally and legally to interpret a Soldier's postmobilization status, not the mechanism used to mobilize him, as dispositive for purposes of

the “unit” prong of the statute. This approach would abandon the fiction of creating provisional units to get Soldiers on active duty and would rely instead on the concepts of “assignment” or “attachment.”

Rather than asking DA to mobilize a DUIC as a vehicle to get one or more fillers to a unit in another state or component, the state adjutant general would publish orders assigning or attaching Soldiers to receiving units. The state would then mobilize Soldiers as members of their units of attachment rather than as individual members of a unit comprising a separate DUIC. Clearly this approach would require further development, and it does not fit the statutory language perfectly. However, it would satisfy the intent of the statute at least as well as, and probably better than, current practices.

The critical point is that a truly efficient mobilization process requires a better method of mobilizing individual ARNG and USAR unit members when necessary (subject to the approval of the governor, as currently required).¹⁶ The Army should employ the unit mobilization process (the DUIC vehicle, for example) only where the mobilized element really is a unit in the meaningful sense of a discrete group of Soldiers with a permanent, organized chain of command, a corporate identity, an explicit collective mission, and other unit indicia, such as separate installation accounts, property accountability actions, and so on.¹⁷

This is not to say that the ARNG and USAR should be routinely levied for individual Soldiers. On the contrary, the Army should look to them to provide trained and ready units. However, a better method is needed for those cases when the ARNG and USAR must contribute individual Soldiers.

Personnel Shortages

One of the most significant challenges facing large mobilizing units is pinning down unit personnel shortages and tracking the progress toward filling them. A major lesson from recent mobilizations is that the populations of large units are extremely volatile. Many problems rendering Soldiers nondeployable emerge only after mobilization or occur as a result of postmobilization training. Thus, the unit must be backfilled by others from the unit's home state. Further complicating the process is that many Soldiers initially deemed nondeployable will ultimately resolve their issues and return to deploy with their units.

Such turbulence is aggravated by the Army's lack of a uniform standard for reporting personnel statistics for mobilizing units and the lack of a common lexicon to support it. Further hampering the effort is the apparent difficulty in transmitting timely and accurate information on current and projected vacancies from the company level through channels to brigade and higher levels for action. The result is a disjointed, unsynchronized manning effort: Vacancies emerge and are passed on to RC headquarters for fill too late for the fillers to attend collective training with the unit while other fillers report to units only to find that the previously vacant positions against which they were mobilized have already been filled. Meanwhile, unit commanders find the process frustratingly opaque, unresponsive, and slow.

The Army needs something better. It needs a fast, flexible, accurate system for identifying unit vacancies and sourcing them for fill. A successful system would—

- Be bottom-driven, starting with input from unit first sergeants directly into the system.
- Replace the current vertical, sequential process for staffing unit vacancies with a horizontal,

collaborative system under which all stakeholders have real-time visibility of both unit vacancies and of the status of efforts to fill them.

- Include a standard lexicon and reporting procedures common across all components.
- Be fully integrated with all existing legacy databases, with the ability to view, upload, and download data.

Time for a Change

Specialists in areas ranging from information technology to personnel policy might object to the observations and proposals outlined here. Some will argue that the proposed capabilities already exist; others will argue that solutions to the problems described are already under development. These assertions are true. Capabilities do exist and reforms are underway, but all of them are inadequate to the challenge. The capabilities are inaccessible and unknown to many commanders in the field, or they cover over specific problems and do not address the Army's business processes in a global fashion. The Army needs a sea-change in institutional procedures—a transformational shift to a flatter, more flexible, more collaborative force. **MR**

NOTES

1. Joint Resolution relating to the volunteer force enlisted into the service of the United States or the State of Michigan, January 17, 1862. *Acts of the Legislature of the State of Michigan, Passed at the Extra Session of 1862* (Lansing, MI: John A. Kerr and Company, 1862), 64-65.

2. Dave Moniz, "Rate of Guard Deaths Higher: War in Iraq Claims More Part-Timers," 1st ed., *USA Today*, 13 December 2004, A.1; Moniz, "Army Guard Now Says Its Iraq Troops Figure was Inaccurate; Gave Newspaper Wrong Count," final ed., *USA Today*, 14 December 2004, A.1; Moniz, "New Guard number shows lower Iraq death rate," final ed., 15 December 2004, A.2.

3. The U.S. Army National Guard (ARNG) figure has typically been the most reliable. The other statistics are based entirely on data derived from U.S. Department of the Army (DA) or individual Total Army Personnel Database (TAPDB) and Defense Finance and Accountability Service (DFAS) mobilization orders. ARNG data begin with information derived from unit mobilization orders but, subsequently, correct this information to reflect the actual number of Soldiers present with their units, as reported by their mobilization stations. This information is input daily and corrected weekly, while TAPDB and DFAS data are updated monthly (although some fields are updated more often).

4. Here, "unit" does not mean a unit in the ordinary sense; rather, it refers to each Unit Identification Code that has been mobilized under a separate unit mobilization order.

5. On one occasion, an officer charged with studying the true status of the force stated that he had stopped counting the many factors that contribute to the situation after he had identified 40 or more examples. Some principle examples include the DFAS database, TAPDB; the DA Mobilization Processing System (DAMPS) and its companion, the Mobilization and Deployment Information System (MDIS); the Deployment and Redeployment Tracking System (DARTS); the Deployed Theater Accountability System (DTAS); and many others.

6. The legal basis for distinguishing between the mobilization of units and the mobilization of individual Soldiers in those units is Title 10, *U.S. Code* (USC), Section 12302(a), Ready Reserve, which reads: "In time of national emergency declared by the President after January 1, 1953, or when otherwise authorized by law, an authority designated by the Secretary concerned may, without the consent of the persons concerned, order any unit, and any member not assigned to a unit organized to serve as a unit, in the Ready Reserve under the jurisdiction of that Secretary to active duty (other than for training) for not more than 24 consecutive months." (The Ronald Reagan Defense Authorization Act of 2005 removed the bar on ordering members to active duty for training.) See National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005, Public Law 108-375, Section 514.

7. Mobilizing an ARNG unit or derivative unit identification code (DUIC) requires five orders: a DA alert order; a National Guard Bureau alert order; a DA mobilization order; a unit mobilization order published by the First U.S. Army; and a unit mobilization order published by the state Joint Forces Headquarters. These would be followed by individual mobilization orders for each unit member.

8. One basis for this practice is U.S. Department of Defense Directive (DODD) 1235.10, "Activation, Mobilization, and Demobilization of the Ready Reserve," para. E2.1.17, which defines a unit as "any identified and managed group or detachment of one or more individuals organized to perform a particular function whether or not such a group is part of a larger group."

9. Unlike individual fillers who are members of ARNG or U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) units, fillers from the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) do not require DUICs. They simply receive individual mobilization orders. Likewise, Active Component Soldiers tapped as fillers for ARNG or USAR units do not require a mobilized DUIC; they receive temporary or permanent change of station orders directing them to the unit's mobilization station.

10. DAMPS, MDIS, DARTS, and DTAS have some capability to either link disparate DUICs or aggregate Soldiers from multiple DUICs under a single unit, but each system accomplishes the linkage only after the action has passed through multiple headquarters at a point in the process remote in time and space from the units and Soldiers affected. Also, the work accomplished is not updated to any other system and is not easily accessible to other stakeholders.

11. Buying off-the-shelf products might require a bit of a paradigm shift for the Army, which seems to rely heavily on custom-built, proprietary, in-house systems. This tendency is understandable: The Armed Forces first began using automated data processing systems during World War II when any system it used almost had to be custom-built. For a long time thereafter military demand was a principal stimulus of advancements in computer and software technology. The world has changed, however. The military is no longer preeminent in this area. The Army can expect better results from technologies developed in and for the private sector.

12. See DODD 1235.10, para. E2.1.17, which provides a regulatory basis for this practice.

13. See Title 10, USC.

14. DODD 1235.10.

15. DODD 1235.10 defines a unit as one or more Soldiers. However, the definition specifies that a unit is one or more Soldiers *organized for a specific purpose*, which implies much more than a single-Soldier entity mobilized solely as filler or replacement. (Emphasis added.)

16. Administrative procedures do exist for bringing Reserve Component (RC) Soldiers on duty without DUICs, but they are limited. The Human Resources Command in Alexandria, Virginia, publishes orders for ARNG and RC unit members activated as individuals under Title 10, USC, Section 12301, and for Soldiers from the IRR, with neither group requiring DUICs. However, unit members activated under Title 10, USC, Section 12301, must be volunteers. Unlike for IRR Soldiers, no mechanism exists to bring unit members on active duty under Partial Mobilization (Title 10, USC, Section 12302(a)) or Presidential Reserve Call Up (Title 10, USC, Section 12304).

17. I assume that even if the Army develops a mechanism for calling up individual unit members under Title 10, USC Sections 12302(a) or 12304, such mobilizations of individual Soldiers from the ARNG would still require the approval of the governor of each Soldier's state, acting through the authority of the State Adjutant General.